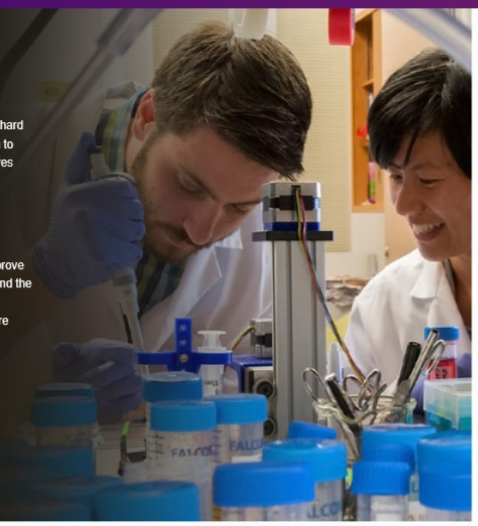
The Passion Behind the Medicine



At UW Medicine, there is a passion behind all that we do. We bring together the best in patient care, research and education with brilliant minds, remarkable hands and open hearts. We do this through hard work, sleepless nights, and a dedication to discover a better way. We are on a never-ending mission to create the best medicine possible and to improve the health of every individual and the millions of lives around the world.

This is the passion behind UW Medicine.

Since its inception, UW Medicine has taken on the challenge of improving medicine to ultimately improve lives. Our collaborative, innovation-focused spirit draws healthcare providers and scientist from around the world who share our mission. Below are just a few highlights of the many medical milestones and breakthroughs UW Medicine has achieved, all in the name of providing our patients with the best care possible.

To learn more about our quality awards, click here.

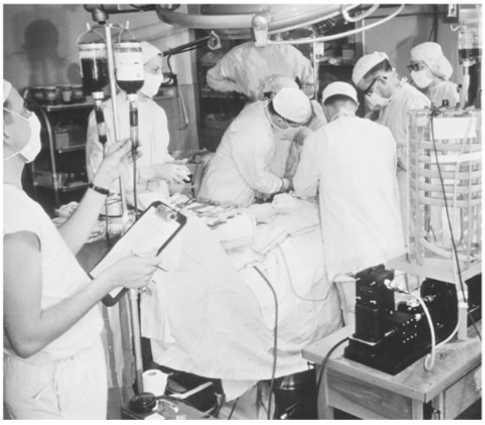
To view a list of our 2018 Top Docs click here.

To make a medical appointment at any of our hospitals or clinics, click here.

1956

First Heart Lung Bypass surgery west of the Mississippi.

When ten-year-old Tommy Fangboner from Ellensburg, WA became the first patient in the western U.S. to receive a successful open-heart surgery, all he cared about was getting back to playing baseball. His UW Medicine surgical team made repairs to his right ventricle after stopping his heart and re-routing his blood through the heart-lung by-pass machine. The risky surgery was made possible thanks to the skill of the medical team and the innovation of UW engineering student Wayne Quinton, who went on to design and build a shunt for long-term kidney dialysis and many other innovative devices.



1960

World's first long-term dialysis patient treated at UW Medicine.

Prior to the 1950s, a kidney failure diagnosis was practically a death sentence. The advent of dialysis was a breakthrough, but glass shunts used in the treatment ultimately damaged veins and arteries, making long-term dialysis impossible. In 1960, Dr. Belding Scribner and his team at UW Medicine developed a flexible Teflon shunt that kept the circulatory access open after dialysis treatment. The kidney dialysis machine could then be reattached later without compromising veins or arteries, thus enabling ongoing long term dialysis treatments.

1969

Medic One becomes the nation's first mobile program for pre-hospital emergency care.

In the late 1960s, Dr. Leonard Cobb, a cardiologist at UW Medicine's Harborview Medical Center, knew that if properly trained, Seattle Fire Department (SFD) first responders could administer life-saving procedures in the field. In 1969, 15 SFD firefighters received classroom and hospital-based hands-on training in life-saving emergency procedures. The recruits learned coronary care basics, including rhythm recognition, intra-cardiac injection, intubation, and defibrillator use. Medic One and the modern paramedic training program was born. Before long, patients who were clinically dead in the field were being successfully resuscitated and treated before transport to the hospital. Later, Medic One was expanded to provide care for trauma, poisoning, stroke, and other medical emergencies. Today, the program is a worldwide model for communities who want to deliver the very best pre-hospital care.

1985

First ultrasound-guided radioactive seed implantation for prostate cancer in the U.S.

In 1985, physicians at UW Medicine's Northwest Hospital performed the first ultrasound-guided radioactive seed implantation (brachytherapy) in the U.S. to battle prostate cancer. This breakthrough innovation -- the gold standard in treatment at the time and used widely today -- involved using ultrasound to guide the implantation of radioisotope "seeds" into and around the prostate, allowing a high dose of radiation to be delivered with limited damage to surrounding tissues. Unlike earlier procedures, where implants had been placed during open surgery, this minimally-invasive, "closed" procedure, cost less, targeted the cancer far more accurately, produced far fewer complications and could be done in an outpatient setting.

1994

First hospital in the world to receive a Magnet designation for excellence in nursing care.

UW Medical Center was the first hospital to receive the Magnet Nursing Services designation by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC). ANCC offers this recognition to institutions that integrate nurses in decision-making; promote a standards-based professional nursing practice; offer ongoing performance and outcome monitoring; and establish a quality improvement system. The credential proves a level of nursing care excellence that helps attract the highest quality nursing professionals and leads to better patient outcomes. UWMC has maintained the designation in consecutive 4-year terms.

2015

First to use 'heart in a box' in U.S. trial.

The revolutionary 'heart in a box' device extends the duration a donor heart can safely be out of a body. The technology may allow more hearts to be transplanted into recipients who currently face long waits for donor organs. Besides being the first in a U.S. clinical trial to use this pioneering device, the UW Medicine transplant team has successfully used this lifesaving machine 14 times during the clinical trial. It's believed that this amazing advancement will make a significant difference to many lives in the Pacific Northwest.

2017

Airlift Northwest becomes the first and only air ambulance to offer blood and plasma on all of its Washington-based aircraft.

In 1982, three children were severely burned in a house fire in Sitka, Alaska. They ultimately died from their injuries because there was no way to transport them to Seattle for definitive care in the region's only Level 1 Trauma Center at UW Medicine's Harborview Medical Center. Harborview's director, Dr. Michael Copass, vowed that this would never happen again and Airlift Northwest was born. Airlift Northwest has safely transported more than 100,000 patients throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska. Operating 24/7/365, every flight is staffed with two highly experienced flight nurses. They travel on a fleet of helicopters, Learjet, and turboprop aircraft, providing airborne critical care. In 2017, Airlift Northwest became the first and only air ambulance in Washington state to provide blood and plasma on all its aircraft, allowing nurses to transfuse critically ill patients while in flight. These life-saving blood products can often reverse the deadly spiral of bleeding and clot disorders that often accompany traumatic injuries.